applicants have been allotted PAN upto 31-10-1998.

The delay in issuing the PAN to applicants is mainly due to incomplete information given in the application forms submitted by the income tax payers. This necessitates the issue of deficiency letters. In all such cases, further processing can be done only after the deficiencies are removed by the applicants. Moreover, a large number of applications have been received in the recent months, which are being processed for allotment of PAN.

The work of allotment of PAN under new series is continuing and all out efforts are being made for expeditious allotment of PAN to the applicants.

Computerisation of Banking Operations

1727. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present status of computerisation of banking operations and number and percentage of branches of Nationalised Banks in urban areas computerised Banks-wise so far and the schedule of complete computerisation;

(b) whether Chief Vigilance Commissioner has suggested early computerisation of banking operations to weed out major source of corruption; and

(c) if so, the details of action plan finalised by the Nationalised Banks and major Financial Institutions to computerise their operations fully to help eradicate corruption and targets for the current year and the Ninth Plan Period, Bank-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN): (a) The bank wise position of computerisation in Nationalised banks as on 31st March, 1998 is given below:—

Sl. No.	Bank	Branches fully Computerised	No. of Branches Partially Computerised
1.	Allahabad Bank	25	136
2.	Andhra Bank	35	156
3.	Bank of Baroda	60	646
4.	Bank of India	250	243
5.	Bank of Maharashtra	53	124
5.	Canara Bank	260	495
7.	Central Bank of India	194	86
8.	Corporation Bank	207	—
9.	Dena Bank	95	195
10.	Indian Bank	109	115
11.	Indian Overseas Bank	54	339
12.	Oreiental Bank of Commerce	51	150
13.	Punjab National Bank	191	205
14.	Punjab & Sind Bank	31	164
15.	Syndicate Bank	100	259

Sl. No.	Bank	Branches fully Computerised	No. of Branches Partially Computerised
16.	UCO Bank	18	200
17.	Union Bank of India	61	402
18.	United Bank of India	12	92
19.	Vijaya Bank	80	77

(b) and (c) Computerisation in the banking industry is not only for the purpose of reducing the possibilities of corruption but also for the purposes of enhancing the efficiency of banks and providing better customer service. The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) have issued instructions in exercise of the power conferred on the CVC by Section 8(1)(h) of the Central Vigilance Commission ordinance 1998 that all banks must ensure that 70% of their business is captured through computerisation before 01.01.2001.

Merger of Public Sector Banks

1728. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item, which appeared in 'The Statesman' dated the 15th September, 1998 wherein the Chairman of Indian Banks Association has stated that there is no need to keep 29 public sector banks and some of these should be merged; and

(b) if so, what is Governmet's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (BANKING, REVENUE AND INSURANCE) (SHRI KADAMBUR M.R. JANARTHANAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) There is no proposal at present to merge public sector banks.

Reports of the NCAER

1729. SHRI E. BALANANDAN: SHRI C.O. POULOSE:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the reports of the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) released in the 2nd week of August, '98 which warned Government that in near future there would be no industrial recovery, foreign inflows would fall by as much as one billion dollars, interest rates and inflation would rise and the rupee would sink to 44 to the dollar; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): (a) A report entitled "Review of the Economy" brought out by the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in Septemeber, 1998 has high-lighted the trends of major macro economic variables in the Indian Economy in 1998-99. The report indicated that there is a slump in the foreign direct investment inflows and slowdown in industrial growth in the first quarter of 1998-99. It further mentioned that interest rates may harden, inflation rate picked up momentum since April, 1998, and rupee depreciated by about 12 per cent during the first quarter of 1998-99.

(b) Views of research institutions and professional organisations involved in